

Thank you ladies and gentleman for your time and attention .

I am Bonnie Dean and this is my secret husband, Doug Dean., we reside in Alden, MI in Antrim Co. We are here to try to make our secret marriage public and register our license in the County Clerks office in Bellaire MI.

I found myself pregnant in the spring of 1967. In mid May we told our parents, and after a joint discussion between both sets of parents and ourselves, we made the decision that we should get married. Within 10 days, I had to see a baby doctor, got expelled from school and was sitting in front of a Judge in the Antrim Co. Court House. Both sets of parents gave their permission for us to marry and signed the appropriate papers, which Doug and I had to sign also. This was necessary because we were both under age. I was 16, Doug was 17.

We got married in the First Methodist Church in Mancelona MI on June 10th, 1967, Reverend Turnpening performed the ceremony. 120 people attended our wedding. The best man, the maid of honor, the organist, the ushers and everyone who helped serve the cake and punch in the basement of the church were aged 16 and 17.

With the marriage license that was given to us by the minister, I changed my name on my drivers license and social security card.

Life went on, we had our first daughter, Missy, in September of 1967.

In March of 1971, our mobile home burned. We lost all the personal things we had accumulated in those 4 years, including important papers, one of which was our marriage license.

We built a house on the property that our mobile home was on. We live there to this day. We had a 2nd daughter in 1975.

In 1992, my mother asked me for a copy of our marriage license. She was putting a geneology book together for my side of the family. So I went to the County Clerks Office to get a copy. Thats where this whole thing got started. The lady that waited on me there, asked if I was sure I got married in

Antrim Co. to which I replied "Mancelona is still in Antrim Co. isn't it?" After some more conversation, I remembered the Secret Marriage term and I told her that. That's when she sent me to Probate Court. The lady that waited on me in the Probate Court Office asked me if I wanted a copy of the marriage license only or all 3 pages, so I took the 3 pages. An eye-opener to say the least. I sure don't remember the language on that paper from Judge Ford.

Within a few days of getting those copies, I found out that a copy of a secret marriage license can only be obtained by the husband or wife that is involved. We had been married almost 25 years and I didn't think it needed to be secret anymore. So I wrote a letter to the current Probate Judge (Judge Unger). I was sure it was just a matter of signing some papers and we would be done. Judge Unger called me at our Office soon after and offered to marry us again, since a lot of people renew their vows at 25 years. I said "great, will I get a marriage license?" He said "yes but it would be for the date he remarried us". Our oldest daughter was married and had made us grandparents and our youngest was in High School. We didn't think we needed a marriage license that put the date 25 years after the fact.

I wrote to the Governor of Michigan, the President of the United States and hired a lawyer. The Lawyer informed me of the Law that covered the secret marriage, that there was no escape clause and also told me that any publication of such marriage is punishable as a misdemeanor. I'm glad the local paper did not know that.

I called Sen. Debbie Stabenow's office and they put me in contact with Rep. Tristan Cole's office and that's how I found Denise Pallarito. She's the one who has got us this far and I thank her for her work and persistence.

Making our marriage license public is the main thing on my bucket list. I hope that future generations can find our marriage license, anyone who has looked for ancestors knows how informative they can be and we don't want our descendants to have legal problems down the road if they need to produce proof of our marriage.

Doug and I had our secret 50th wedding anniversary in June. For 50 years we have been man and wife. I don't know how to be anything else.

Thanks again for your consideration

